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TO

THE CHINESE.

BY

ARTHUR H. SMITH.



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THE BEST METHOD OF PRESENTING THE GOSPEL TO THE CHINESE.*

By REV. ARTHUR H. SMITH.

ABOUT fourteen years ago a series of articles appeared in the *Chinese Recorder* on a subject nearly allied to that which I have selected. The treatment was, however, almost exclusively directed to the matter to be presented, and not to the manner of its presentation, and contained very little which can afford an answer to the question now raised.

One of the most interesting and valuable Essays at the Conference of Protestant Missionaries held at Shanghai in 1877, was presented by Rev. Wm. Muirhead. Several members of the Conference made important contributions to the discussion, full of suggestions and hints upon almost every phase of the subject. The questions, however, arising out of this many sided theme resemble in an important particular, the ghost of Banquo. In some of their wider aspects, these problems are of universal interest, confined to no single country, and to no one age. Whether viewed in the general, or in the particular, they can never be dismissed as already solved, nor regarded, like essays at Squaring the Circle, or Perpetual Motion, as beyond further debate.

It is not intended in this discussion to trench upon the field of Homiletics, except as necessity compels, much less upon the domain of systematic theology. The reference is exclusively to preaching, and not to the preparation of books or tracts. The indispensable subjective qualifications of the preacher, and the absolute necessity of an entire dependence upon supernatural aid for any successful preaching, are preliminary postulates. Without the latter assistance, the attempt to convert men anywhere, is beyond exception the most preposterous enterprise in which it is possible for man to embark. A general and substantial agreement in regard to the main Doctrines of Christianity, is presupposed. The question raised concerns their respective Order, Emphasis, and the Modes of statement. The subject is to be considered chiefly, but not exclusively, with reference to those particulars which, if not peculiar, are at least specially characteristic of preaching to the Chinese, as distinguished from preaching to other nations or races.

The subject is naturally divided into two parts. Preaching to Heathen Chinese, and Preaching to Chinese Christians. Much of

* That portion of the following paper which relates to the presentation of the Gospel to the Heathen in China, was read before the Peking Missionary Association, May 24th, 1883 and with considerable amplification is now published *without request* of some who heard it and did not like it, and of others who did not hear it, but did not think they should have liked it if they had heard it.

what falls under the first head, is also pertinent to the second, but in some particulars preaching to the class last named differs materially from preaching to the former class.

I. Preaching the Gospel to Heathen Chinese. That regard should be had to the time, place, circumstances, and character of the audience is of course axiomatic. It may be said that, at least in our part of China, Missionaries seldom have the opportunity to reach any who are above the rank of the lowest literary graduate (Hsiu-ts'ai), and even these only with comparative infrequency. Probably ninety-five *per cent* of our auditors are farmers, small tradesmen, coolies and loafers. Dr. Oliver. W. Holmes has observed truly that the *average* intelligence of any considerable number of hearers is never very low. If this can be predicated of the United States, how much more is it true of China. In view of these considerations, the first principle to be named, is that preaching to the Heathen Chinese should be Direct. Herbert Spencer bases his suggestive Philosophy of Style upon the principle that that method by which a thought is conveyed to the mind of another with the least mental friction is, for that reason, the best. Mr. Spencer's own style is certainly characterized by directness, but he has been justly criticized for too great intolerance of what he would doubtless term 'rhetorical posies'—ornament which adorns, but does not directly help. Yet it should not be forgotten that such indirect rhetorical assistance is often of the greatest service. Mr. Spencer's style would be improved by it. But his main principle is a true one. Friction in machinery is a great but incurable evil. But even if friction were abolished, the mechanic might find himself confronted with new and unanticipated difficulties. Mental friction is worse than mechanical friction, for the reason that we can never be sure that it has been fully overcome. Whatever increases it should be avoided.

(1) The principle named requires that the initial effort should be to fix and hold the Attention of the audience. The first in a series of military orders is always this; "Attention, Company!" It may be thought that so obvious a truth needs no statement. It is embodied in every rhetorical primer, not to speak of every treatise on Homiletics. We are, however, not at present speaking either rhetorically or homiletically, but of the special relation between a foreign missionary and a Chinese audience. If that audience be a heathen one, the presumption is *always* against the foreigner. It is supposed that *of course* he cannot be understood, that what he says is *of course* of no practical importance. Observe that in a purely heathen audience, there is almost invariably a total lack of any sympathy between speaker and hearer. To some extent this is true

even in 'nominally Christians lands'—how much more in the case of the Chinese. The bulk of those who constitute an audience at Street Chapels, at Fairs, in Dispensaries &c., so far as we are concerned are in a condition of perfect intellectual torpor. In a certain private school of our boyhood, one of the pupils was frequently recalled from his day-dream by the sharp inquiry of his teacher; Arthur Jones, what *are* you 'thinking about?' I 'aint thinking of nothing ma'am' was his invariable, and no doubt truthful reply. This young man was in this respect a prototype of the average heathen audience. They 'ain't thinking of nothing ma'am.' Our business is to wake them up, and *make* them think of something 'ma'am.' Their mental processes are slow—often so slow that there seems to be no process at all of any kind. It was said in justification of a man who failed to mind his own business; that he had no business and no mind. We must prepare for this kind of auditors. A few weeks ago, selecting the most intelligent looking man in a crowded dispensary, I said to him; 'Do you know who made the blue thing overhead and the hard thing underfoot? Do you understand about the Heavens and the Earth?' 'The fact is,' he replied pleasantly, 'I am away from home a good deal of the time.' (我常沒有在家) 'And in the places which you visit there are no Heavens and no Earth, I suppose?' 'To be sure,' was the reply, (不錯). During the year of the Famine we became acquainted with many who had hitherto ignored our existence. Walking one evening near the Village which was our head quarters, an Old Man invited me to sit down and chat. 'How far is it to your country?' When informed that it was perhaps thirty thousand *li by Sea*, he was much surprised, but on learning that the journey could be made in a month or two he replied, 'Sure enough; I have noticed that you always *walk a good deal faster than we do.*' This was encouraging. Acting, however, on the principle which I am trying to commend to my brethren, I endeavored to work in a little gospel, by showing that all lands, however widely separated, have the same God, as all the Empire has one Ruler. 'Do you know about Peking?' was asked. 'No.' 'Do you know about the Imperial Court?' (朝廷) 'No.' 'Did you never hear of the Emperor?' (皇帝) 'Yes.' 'Where is the Emperor?' (Huang Ti,) Raising his withered finger and pointing to a bank of the yellow loam of that region, he replied; 'That is the Huang Ti'—(黃地) 'Yellow Earth!' The Chinese Rustie is often a complete Agnostic. He knows something about Eating, and something about the 'Struggle for existence.' This is his Positive Philosophy; upon other topics his mind is bare. The main difference between him and his Occidental Agnostic brother is that the Chinese mind was apparently

created bare, whereas the mind of the Occidental Agnostic—like the meat bones of a Chinese butcher, has become bare by the process of Agnostic Scraping. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the Preacher should know exactly how to preach to people with no mind at all! This will be variously difficult or otherwise according to temperament and natural gifts. In many cases an indispensable preliminary to securing any real attention, is to administer a mental shock. The missionary who wades or swims into the sluggish intellectual waters of the Chinese, must act as a torpedo fish, throwing off electricity right and left as he proceeds. The approved system of Rhetoric from Aristotle and Quintillian downward, remind us of what is called the Introduction Conciliatory, by which a way is paved in the hearer's mind for the speaker's advance. The use and abuse of this principle in preaching to the Chinese, may be exemplified by the case of an ordinary villager, contrasted with that of a Confucian scholar. In a conversation with the latter, it would be the height of folly to begin with an attack upon the weak points and the deficiencies in the teachings of the "Throneless King." Good sense requires that the points of *resemblance* and harmony should first be emphasized, rather than the disagreement with Christianity. Does the principle require us to postpone all attacks upon idolatry and superstition until we have gradually enlightened the mind of the auditor, so these misbeliefs fall away of themselves? There are thousands of temples in which the gods are crumbling to fragments, but they are still regarded as divine, really or potentially, for they may at any time be set upon the thrones again. Here and there a heathen temple has been purged from idolatry, not by the slow process of decay, but by vigorous arms and strong hands tumbling the extinct idols into a ditch. This process must not be begun too soon; neither must it be delayed too long. Our aim is to seize the favorable juncture, and fling the heathen divinities out of the Chinese soul, as we have seen idols cast out of a temple. The Confucianist is enraged at any arraignment of Confucius. Chinese in general are *not* angered by attacks upon idolatry. The distinction is fundamental. I believe the state of the Chinese mind on the subject of idol worship to be that of an old farmer, who when told by a neighbor that the gods are only mud and have no power, replied simply, 'I suspected as much all the time,' (我含糊是那麼着). It should be our object to confirm all such suspicions when they exist, and to awaken them where they do not exist. The securing of the attention of the audience is so important a consideration, that everything else must be sacrificed to gain it, unless such sacrifice involves a surrender of principle, or

a violation of common sense. Its capital importance arises from the fact that attention is a condition preliminary to everything else. Failing there, we fail everywhere.

(2) The principle of Directness, is violated by the use, to which there is among educated foreigners a certain tendency, of a *high style of mandarin*. The reference is not to conversation with educated men but to preaching to an *average audience*, a pregnant phrase the importance of which must be constantly borne in mind. The existence in Chinese of a high literary style, (*Wen-li*) totally distinct from colloquial speech, is a fact having very important bearings, not only upon the preparation of Christian books for the Chinese, but also upon the preaching of the gospel. China is dominated by her educated class, and the whole life of the educated class is spent in study having for its direct object the mastery of a finished literary style, upon success in which scholastic honors, and all future prosperity depend. It is not strange that these conditions, coupled with the almost idolatrous reverence with which the ancient Classics are regarded, have caused the ordinary colloquial speech to be viewed by highly educated Chinese, in somewhat the same light in which some Christian ascetics have regarded the human body, as a vile and unworthy instrument which, though its use can not be for an instant pretermitted, is yet employed only under perennial protest. When finished classical scholars meet, like the ostrich of the desert, they spurn the dust beneath their feet, flapping their strong wings, and in an instant they are entirely out of sight of the humbler orders of creation. The Classics, Antithetical Couplets, Odes, and the splendid spoils of ancient Literature in general, are at their command. Nowhere, perhaps, is pride of learning carried to a greater pitch than in China, and viewed from a Chinese standpoint, nowhere is its indulgence more reasonable. It is not surprising that when foreign missionaries are confronted with scholarship of this type, they should be filled with a certain dismay, nor that after long and anxious reflection, some of them, should, like the learned Mathew Ricci, and the distinguished Jesuit missionaries to the Chinese of whom he was the leader, come to the conclusion that the only way to reach Chinese Scholars is to become a Chinese Scholar oneself.

The Apostle Paul is generally considered to have been not only a sagacious man, but a shrewd missionary, and it was the principle of his preaching to become all things to all men if by any means he might gain some. This is the wisdom of inspiration. If we hold—as doubtless the learned Jesuits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries held—that the only way to reach China is through her Scholars—the Jesuit model would be the one to imitate,

Let us, however, recur to the vitally important phrase 'an average audience.' 'An average audience' as already explained consists of farmers, barbers, yamen-runners, small tradesmen, coolies and loafers. All of these individuals have, no doubt, an inborn respect for Chinese literature. A style of address which shall be elegant, full of historical allusions and of classical quotations, would be much admired by the farmers, yamen-runners, tradesmen, coolies, loafers et al., who constitute the 'average audience.' If a missionary is capable of acquiring such a style, there is but one objection to his employing it—the absolute certainty that his 'average audience' can not comprehend it. "My dear F." writes Mr. Ruskin with a slight tinge of impatience in his tone, "not one man in 15,000 in the nineteenth century knows or ever knew what any line, or any word, means, used by a great writer. For most words stand for things that are seen, or things that are thought of; and in the nineteenth century there is certainly not one man in 15,000 who ever looks at anything, and not one in 15,000,000 capable of a thought." According to this estimate it would appear that there are only about two individuals among the whole population of British Isles, capable of [original] thought. This tallies with Carlyle's census, '30,000,000, people in Great Britain, *mostly Fools*. The number of Thinkers is doubtless put too low in the one case, and the number of Fools too high in the other, but each proposition, however extravagant its terms, contains a truth for those who are able or willing to receive it. The average intelligence of mankind is *low*, and he who wishes to be certain that he is comprehended by mankind at large, must speak with the utmost simplicity and directness. The temptations to speak otherwise are always and everywhere strong. What did the minister preach about?" asks a character in a well known religious novel. 'Oh! I don't know, I am sure, what he said,' replies Kitty Trevelyan, 'only I know it rolled along like the waves of the Sea.' With a certain amount of practice, it is much less difficult for a preacher to a Chinese audience, to 'roll along like the waves of the Sea,' than to be certain that his audience will comprehend him. The contest which we finally believe Christianity must conduct in China is a life struggle. If Christianity can not be understood it can not exist. If it disdains the only speech in which it can be made intelligible to an enormous majority of the population of China, how is it to gain a foothold at all. The battle for the right of the people to an instruction which they can understand in their own vernacular, which was fought in Europe, has lessons which are pertinent to China. At the time of the Protestant Reformation all scholars used

Latin, and nothing but Latin. The Bible, the Prayer book, the homilies, letters, literature, everything worth reading at all, was in Latin. It was as necessary to dethrone the tyrannical language by which the Word of God was bound, as to unchain that same Word from monasteries, and make it accessible to millions. The learned men of that age, regarded the rebellion against scholastic Latin as the triumph of the barbarians over civilization, yet out of that barbarian triumph sprang the German and the English languages. The instinct of scholars in all ages has been to cling to classical modes of expression. When the Latin language was driven out of use, and supplanted by the English, the residuary legatee of the Latin was a style which has been aptly termed Johnsonese. "What did King David do," was asked of a boy in an English Charity school, "when the servants told him that the child was dead?" "Please sir," was the reply "he cleaned himself, and took to his victuals." The admirers of the high, polite (*Wen-li*) style would be shocked at such home-spun talk, and would array the matter thus; What course of action did King David pursue, when he received intelligence of the demise of the infant? Answer; He performed his ablutions, and immediately proceeded to partake of refreshment.

A certain Sinologue remarked that he disliked to hear a particular missionary preach, because his speech was too colloquial. This was a very natural criticism for a Sinologue, but an irrelevant criticism from one missionary upon another and we can scarcely fail to feel an added respect for the man who, in the effort to become all things to all men, was ready to condescend to a rude *patois*. Missionaries do not come to China to exemplify the possibility of a foreigner's speaking the Chinese language with elegance, but to reach 'every creature,' according to our marching orders. In many cases this can, we repeat, only be done by the aid of speech which the rudest and most uncultivated *can not misunderstand*. What signifies the elegance and propriety of our diction, if people do not know what we say? Of what value is a mouth-full of the seven empty characters—a correct use of which is difficult even for a Literary Graduate, if it leaves the hearers minds as empty as the characters? Let us not forget the wise saying of Confucius: "In speech one must be intelligible—and that is the end of it."

Christianity always and everywhere begins with the lowest stratum of society and works upward. 'The loftiest tower,' says the Chinese adage, 'rests after all upon the ground.' "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called." Christianity comes to the poor, the oppressed, the outcast, the fallen and the slave-

It binds up the broken hearted, and proclaims the opening of the prison to them that are bound. This it does, by mingling with the poor and the lowly as did the Master himself, upon a level with the poor and the lowly. It is all things to all men, a Jew to the Jew, and a Greek to the Greek; it seeks not after 'excellency of speech or of wisdom,' if so be it may preach Christ to those who have no wisdom and who can not comprehend it but who can yet be taught the way of salvation.

(3) The principle of directness is violated by the use of metaphors and illustrations, which while to an Occidental mind they are self explanatory, are to the Chinese difficult or impossible of apprehension. It is often hard for a foreigner to realize that with very rare exceptions, Balloons, Suspension-bridges, Electricity, Machinery, Astronomy, Botany and all the 'ologies' do not to the Chinese mind illustrate anything, but rather serve to confuse and confound. It is not intended to deny that these matters, and many others should be taught to such Chinese as may be able to comprehend explanations of them. The objection is against their use, which is believed to be by no means uncommon, in advance of any explanation, or when, as in ninety-nine cases in an hundred, the subjects are very imperfectly apprehended by the hearers. The illustration should yield light and not darkness. To use such foreign aids to thought, is to find a feather to the tip of an arrow at right angles to the line of the arrow's flight. It may cause a rushing sound but accuracy of aim will be fatally destroyed. The end which it is designed to accomplish, can nearly always be much better secured in other ways.

(4) The principle named, forbids the use to heathen audiences, of Scripture *allusions*, unless they are fully explained. It was a just criticism upon the methods of a mission to the dance-women and roughs of lower New York, that the dialect of the preachers was as unintelligible to their audience, as a technical description of a prize-fight would have been to the members of a Presbytery. Of what use when preaching to black-legs in a rat-pit, to speak of Canaan's land, Jordan's Shore, the Ark of Safety, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, the Water of Life, &c., &c., &c. To us, it is true, these expressions, and a multitude of others like them, are so instinct with meaning that it is by a vigorous effort only, that we can conceive how to a semi-barbarous audience like the one supposed, they are fatally meaningless.

Remembers Tennyson's 'Northern Farmer,' who seems to have attended this style of preaching:—

'An I hallus comed to's choorch afoor my Sally wur doäd,
 'An I 'eerd un a bunmin awaäy, loike a buzzard clock over my yeäd;
 'Au I niver know'd what a meän'd but I thowd a'ad sammat to säy,
 'An I thowt a said what a ont to a said an I comed awaäy.

When little Jo in 'Bleak House' was dying upon his matrass at General George's, Allen Woodcourt puts his mouth very near his ear, and says to him in a low, distinct voice: 'Jo; did you ever know a prayer? 'Never know nothing Sir!' 'Not so much as one short prayer?' 'No Sir. Nothing at all. Mr. Chadbands he was a praying' wunst at Mr. Suagshy's and I heerd him but he sounded as if he was a speakin to hisself, and not to me. Ho prayed a lot, but *I* could'nt make out nothing of it. Different times, there was other gentlemen come down to 'Tom all alone's' a praying, but they all mostly sed as tother ones prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded to be a talking to theirselves, or a passing blame on the tothers, and not a talking to us. *We* never know'd nothink. *I* never know'd what it was all about.'

The spiritual comprehension of many Chinese audiences is not above that of the occupant of Tom all alone's, who did not 'know nothing about nothing at all.' Let those who preach to such hearers beware that even in their most earnest efforts, they do not appear to others to be 'talking to theirselves.'

In this connection should be named a difficulty inherent in the Chinese language—to wit its lack of capacity for conveying Christian truths, owing to its being full to the saturation point of heathen associations. There is no term for God until one has been manufactured or purified from heathen suggestions and contaminations. The language must be converted and baptized, as the Greek language was converted and baptized by the New Testament writers and their successors. There is a story of an Irishman who, having bought a cow from a Protestant, decided to pour upon her a little 'holy water' by way of purification. Through mistake a bottle of oil of vitriol was substituted for the water, and when he saw the beast praneing all over the lot, in the vain effort to relieve her pain, her owner exclaimed; 'By the Holy Virgin the Protestant is strong in her yet.' After all the efforts thus far expended upon the Chinese language, after repeated attempts to avoid it, heathenism, it is to be feared, is strong in it yet.

2. Another important principle in preaching to Chinese heathen, is *singleness of aim*. By this we do not simply mean what in Rhetoric is called Unity, by which all the parts of a discourse are blended into a whole. Singleness of aim requires that in preaching to the heathen, we should endeavor to leave a definite impression of some one truth. A sharp blow from a riding, whip, is often more

avoid

effective than the concussion of a slowly revolving iron bar. In one of W. M. Bakers novels, there is a character who was a dead shot, always bringing down his man. He revealed the secret of his uniform success when he remarked; 'I always aim at a button or something.' A missionary should in preaching invariable fix his mind upon some doctrinal 'button or something' and aim at that. In contradistinction to this, there are some who like the preacher described by Archbishop Whately, 'aim at nothing and hit.' The survival of the fittest only, would not improbably kill off a considerable part of our preaching to the Chinese, as well as of Chinese preaching. Pres. Wayland once made a visit to a Reform School for Boys. One of the pupils was afterwards asked what Dr. Wayland said when he addressed them. 'He said, was the reply 'that when a thing is as good as it can be, you can not make it any better.' It is well if all our auditors carry away some one truth, however common place, so firmly fixed in their minds that it can not be dislodged. In preaching to the Heathen we should strictly restrain ourselves, and not range all over the whole field of human thought. There is a story of a man who complained that he could not abandon his drinking habits, and who was asked why he did not set rigid limits to himself, and stop drinking when he reached the fixed limit. He replied that this was just what he had done, only he always got drunk before he reached the limit! It is probable that some preachers, if they have fixed *any* limit to the field to be traversed have fixed that limit at the horizon, which, for obvious reasons, they never overtake. In preaching to those who know nothing of Christianity, to whom all is new, there is a great temptation to imitate Dr. Johnson, and

'Let observation with extensive view
Survey the world from China to Peru.'

Thus of many a rambling discourse to the literally 'benighted heathen,' it might be said, as Dr. Watts hymn affirms of God's truth,

'It touched and glanced on every land.'

The history of much sermonic voyaging is epitomized in the children's rhymes about Noah's Ark.

'A man once launched a vessel large
'And live stock too he took in charge;
He sailed from no port, was to no port bound.
His only wish was soon to run aground.'

Only the hope of his early shipwreck is generally more cherished by his audience, than by himself.

Incomparably patient auditors as the Chinese are, this method or absence of method is very ill adapted to them. It has doubtless

pleased God to save men by the foolishness of preaching, but it has not pleased him to do it by foolish preaching. We must endeavor to teach Chinese, not indeed the *alphabet* of Christian truth, but the *Radicals*. These are not many. Which of them is to come first, will depend upon individual choice. There is a common impression that the doctrine of the Atonement should precede all others. The story is familiar of the Moravian missionary who labored on for years among the ignorant Greenlanders, and who never made the least headway until he changed his plan, and began to speak of the love of Christ. This, he said, is the kind of preaching that converts men. John Williams, the 'Martyr of Erromanga' mentions that he made it an almost invariable rule, whenever he addressed an audience of heathen for the first time, to speak from the text; 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.' Doubtless there are many missionaries in China, who adopt the same plan.

It is related in the memoir of the devoted missionary Wm. C. Burns, that on his voyage to China the vessel in which he sailed during a short stay in the East Indies, was surrounded by half-naked Malays, anxious to sell something to the passengers. Mr. Burns hungered and thirsted to preach the Gospel to these poor heathen, but the absence of any medium of communication rendered this plainly impossible. Yet he was not discouraged, but seizing a shirt he rubbed it vigorously between his hands in hopes that the tawny savages below, would, in some mysterious manner, get the idea that as the garment must be washed in order to be clean, so sinners must be purified by Christ's blood in order to reach heaven. This is the only instance of which we recollect to have heard, where an attempt was made to preach the doctrine of the atonement by pantomime. The proportion of spectators who could by any possibility find out what it was that they were expected to learn, would seem to be somewhat less than the ratio named by Mr. Ruskin in the extract already quoted. Nine observers out of ten, if they got any idea at all, would naturally infer that Mr. Burns was in quest of some one who would do his washing.

At the Missionary Conference in Shanghai, one of the speakers mentioned that after Mr. Burns had become somewhat familiar with the Foochow dialect—having by this time grown wiser as to the method of reaching heathen—he remarked that he thought that the missionaries there were 'too evangelical' in their preaching. In his opinion they dwelt too much on Christ, and too little on the

nature of God. He thought that there could be no logical foundation in the minds of the Chinese to lead them to appreciate the knowledge of Christ, until they had first a clear perception of the idea of a personal God, to whom they are accountable. Of the entire correctness of this view, I, for one, am fully persuaded.

In the series of articles already named a missionary is referred to who raised a Bible high above his head in a dramatic manner exclaiming: 'My business is to inform those who hear me that this is God's message to them.' The apparent implication was, that when this announcement had been made, *his* duty was discharged. In other words, he was simply a religious post-master, attempting to deliver a communication from a Person of whom the Chinese never heard, and of whom they never wished to hear. If this was the substance of his preaching, it would be curious to learn what came of it. Such partial and narrow views of a truth, are often more injurious than down-right heresy for the reason that a grave misapprehension on some one important aspect of Scripture truth, need not prevent the orderly, emphatic, and effective announcement of the rest, whereas such a erotchet as the one just named, if actually made a governing principle, would seem to prevent him who holds it or rather who is held by it, from preaching anything that his audience could understand or appreciate. A missionary's functions are rather those of a Minister Plenipotentiary, than those of a mere messenger. He has or should have full powers. It would certainly be a great mistake to couple our preaching to any one method. In my own experience and for average audiences, I have generally found no other avenue better than the great central truth that there is one God, and that all other divinities are no gods.

3 Preaching to heathen Chinese requires variety of statement of the same truth. As already remarked, it is much easier to ramble over a great diversity of topics, than to present one subject in a multitude of different lights, yet so as to produce a unity of impression upon the mind of an uncultivated audience. It is a matter of prime importance that Christian thought should be presented to the Chinese, *from a Chinese standpoint*. In order to discover the beauty of a painting, it is necessary to place the eye at what artist's term the 'point of view,' the point that is to say, from which all parts of the picture are seen in harmony. To observe a transit of Venus through a telescope it is necessary to place the eye at the focus of the eye-glass, else nothing will be seen but a blur. To take such observations requires considerable experience. Yet it is an indefinitely easier task than to bring Christian truth within the mental

and spiritual range of heathen Chinese. To accomplish this, it is necessary to see, to some extent with Chinese eyes, and to think with Chinese minds. To a foreigner few tasks could be assigned of greater difficulty. The Chinese mind is often regarded as a hopeless puzzle, an interpretation of the workings of which it is useless to expect. It must, however, be evident that he who undertakes to deal with minds, the workings of which he does not in the least understand, and to deal with them by way of revolution, is like a chemist experimenting with substances of the combining powers of which he is ignorant. Such experimenters must be prepared for explosions. For the best effect in addressing Chinese minds, even the uncultivated, some knowledge of Chinese books is well nigh indispensable. The Chinese are a learned nation, and the learning of the upper classes, while almost altogether withheld from the lower classes, is yet the power by which they have been unconsciously moulded. It is, for example, very desirable that a missionary should have a *working knowledge* of the Four Books. By this is meant a general acquaintance with their scope and contents, and such minuter knowledge of certain parts as will enable the preachers to recognize intelligently their authority when quoted by others, and enable him to cite them with more or less freedom for his own purposes. The vital point is such a practical insight into these classics as helps to an understanding of their extraordinary influence over the Chinese. In the Preface to his learned translation of the Chinese Classics, Dr. Legge observes that he did not consider himself qualified to preach to the Chinese until he had 'investigated for himself the whole field of thought through which the Sages of China had ranged.' This is a high ideal but, for the average missionary, I can not think it a reasonable one. Not every one can become a Sinologue, even were such an event desirable and supposing it possible is not the ultimate and the legitimate tendency of such ample and minute scholarship, rather in the direction of Professorships than of Mission chapels?

In attacking the giant of Chinese superstition, it would be well for us to imitate David, leave behind the cumbrous armor which we shall not need, select a few smooth stones, put them in a bag, and project them from our sling with the utmost force which we can command, aiming with accuracy for the center of the forehead. This plan is much better than that of throwing a handful of dust, or even of red pepper, into Goliath's eyes. Let us not forget that David cut off his enemy's head with the enemy's own sword. The Chinese themselves furnish us with a plenty of admirable weapons. Their thoughtless theology forms a loose wall of rubble stones

Dislodge one or two at the bottom, and all the rest come tumbling down. The current mythology is a perfect arsenal of weapons to be used against itself. We should do well to watch the Chinese themselves, and imitate their methods, when they are worthy of imitation. Any system of homiletics which binds us to one any plan is an impertinence and a nuisance. Chinese preaching is at once of the best and of the worst description. I have known a street chapel preacher who invariably began his address by reading a passage of Scripture or an hymn, and then blandly observed (by way of 'Introduction Conciliatory') 'This is no joke.' Another, whose chapel was situated on the principal street of a great city, with a constantly fluctuating audience, perhaps embracing on two successive days totally different persons would begin thus:—'Yesterday we explained the III of Ephesians to the 14th verse, to-day we will begin at the 15th verse.' The pointless garrulity, inexhaustible emptiness, and tireless pursuit of the inconsequential, which characterize many Chinese, we must utterly abjure. Yet when the Chinese preacher appears at his best, he must be an expert missionary who can surpass him. Watch, for example, the manner in which a shrewd Chinese preacher will undermine the faith of his countrymen in the Chinese Mars, *Kuan Ti*. It would be worth while for every missionary to look into the historical novel called the Three Kingdoms, if only with a view to an insight into the facts, (false or otherwise) of this man's life. It is a most important consideration that for the purposes of the missionary, it is of no consequence whatever whether this book is historically perfectly accurate, or, as is commonly supposed 'founded on fact, or even altogether fictitious. For practical purposes this book contains the biography of *Kuan Ti*, who has been promoted by successive Emperors to the very highest point of the Chinese Pantheon, as Protector of the Empire with a temple in every city and every village, and is likewise regarded as a Rain god. Where, inquires the Chinese preacher of his audience, whose attention is at once fixed and riveted, where in the Annals of the Three Kingdoms is it said that *Kuan Yü* caused rain to fall? The Poetical Classic mentions that rain fell ages before *Kuan Yü* was born. Who did that? If *Kuan Yü* never made it rain when he was alive, when and where did he learn the rain-making trade after he was dead? If *Kuan Yü* was able to protect the whole Empire, he must have been able to protect himself who was a subject of that Empire. If he was able to protect himself, how came he to have his head cut off, and his body thrown unburied into a ditch? If when alive he was

unable to protect himself, how did he learn to protect the Empire, after his head was cut off? If he deserved to be made god of war (in consequence of having learned the art of protecting the Empire) why should he have been obliged to wait a matter of 900 years or so before being promoted to that position by a Sung Dynasty Emperor? If *Kuan Yü* was a greater man than the Sung Dynasty Emperor, how was the latter able to deify him? If the Emperor was a greater man than *Kuan Yü*, why not pray directly to the Emperor, and omit *Kuan Yü* altogether? The Emperor depends upon the taxes for his food. His food is entirely dependent upon the rain. *Kuan Yü* is dead and is not in the least dependent upon the rain; we should therefore either pray to the Emperor directly, or to *Kuan Yü* through the Emperor. If *Kuan Yü* is as able to protect the Empire, why was it that he could not, or would not, protect his own temples, and his own image against the Long Haired Rebels?

A general acquaintance with the outlines of Chinese history is desirable for a missionary. Not the kind of historical knowledge possessed by the Sunday School teacher, who informed his class in reply to a question, that Tyre and Sidon were two brothers who lived a long time back, but such a knowledge as renders at least the names and order of the various dynasties as familiar as those of the English sovereigns since the Conquest, and the great epochs of Chinese history as well known as those of Europe. *Chin Shi' Huang*, *Sin Pei*, *Chao K'uang Yin* and *Chu Yuan Chang* should be no more strange sounds, than the names of Constantine, Gregory, Gustavus Adolphus or Napoleon. If no other end were gained, the Chinese would thus come to perceive that their history is not ignored nor misunderstood. The Chinese language abounds in popular sayings, which may often serve as arrow tips to wing a thought into a dull Chinese comprehension, as nothing else can do. There is, besides, a whole literature in China of what are styled Virtue Books (*Shan-shu*) containing an armory of weapons capable of being turned against the Chinese beliefs and misbeliefs, assailing them in their most vulnerable points. In these books Moral Maxims, illustrative Examples taken from real life and fables abound. In one of them, for instance, is the tale of a man who died, and having been brought in Hades before *Yen Wang* the Chinese Pluto, he begged hard to be allowed to return to earth, and enjoy there a few more years of life, urging that the warnings received by him, when alive, of the coming retribution, had been insufficient, and promising, if his request were granted, to practise every known virtue as

long as his life should be spared. To this plea *Yen Wang* sternly answers that in Hades 'there are no acts of pardon passed;' there no pity is to be hoped for but only strict justice; that the frequent bodily infirmities and other misfortunes of the petitioner while alive, as well as the constant succession of deaths of others about him had been his abundant but unheeded warnings, and that even if allowed to return to life, there was no hope, nor possibility of his repentance, since he had wilfully debased his nature, and deliberately rejected admonitions, the importance of which were as well known to him then as now. With these words, sentence is passed and the culprit is hurried off to punishment. For a heathen audience and as an *introduction* only, is not such a purely Chinese allegory as this better than the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, for the reason that it enters the mind without friction? It was remarked of a certain American correspondent in London, that he had the rare qualification of understanding English politics as the English themselves understand them. Such a comprehension of the inner life of a foreign country, especially if that country be an Asiatic one, is extremely rare. In China this ideal can be only indefinitely approached, for the barriers of language, customs, and innate mental constitution, are too many and too high. Yet an earnest and systematic attempt to meet the Chinese upon Chinese ground, instead of expecting them to meet us upon some ground of which they know nothing, and upon which they do not venture to bear their weight, makes them feel that they are to some extent understood. The sermon of Paul upon Mar's Hill, has been the object of admiration in all ages, for its sagacity, its effective use of the circumstances of the occasion, its courtesy, and especially for what it does not say. This discourse, while not necessarily a model to be rigidly followed in detail, is a perennial pattern of the true *spirit* of a missionary address especially for its readiness to enter into the sympathies and feelings of his auditors. He does not expect them to come to him but he comes to them; "as certain even of your own poets have said." If Paul on the Areopagus had violently assailed Athenian customs or even spent his brief address in showing how the Psalms are loftier and deeper than any Greek poetry, while he might have held his place as an Apostle to the Gentiles, he would have thrown serious doubts over his own inspiration.

THE BEST METHOD OF PRESENTING THE GOSPEL TO THE CHINESE.

BY REV. ARTHUR H. SMITH.

(Continued from page 409.)

II. PREACHING TO CHINESE CHRISTIANS.

MUCH of what has been said under the preceding head, is equally applicable here.

1. Preaching to Chinese Christians, should be of the most *practical* character. The obstacles to the establishment of a strong Christian Church in China—whether they are external or internal, are *practical* obstacles. They should be taken hold of 'by the nub end.' There is some danger of our riding theological hobbies, of discoursing upon Doctrine in the abstract, without making anything concrete and vital to the Chinese. A sermon should not be a mere spy-glass with a great number of joints through which it is hoped that some will catch a new and magnified view of truth. It is too difficult for the Chinese to get the focus, and there is too great danger of their looking through the wrong end, and seeing, if indeed they see anything—only 'the infinitely little.' A good sermon should rather be like an inscription, projecting its characters before the eye, with form and substance, not mere shadows, but having length, breadth and thickness. If, in addition to this the figures can be made vital and animated with a living scene, our success will have been almost complete. The bulk of our Sabbath audiences, even at their best, are mere children of a larger growth. They must be treated as such. Some of them absolutely require pictorial narrative, and will assimilate nothing else. To some the parables of Christ are the most effective vehicles of truth. Such truth must be made, not only level to the apprehension of the dullest, but it must be made applicable to each individual case. A chapel should be a Gospel Dispensary, where every case should receive its own diagnosis and, as far as possible, its own treatment. Imagine a Dispensary where the physician should prescribe to all who came on one day a dose of rhubarb, and to all who presented themselves the next day, a blue pill! Our chapel preaching on Sundays, should be as unlike this as possible. The foreign missionary in China can not be, and can not become, a visiting pastor, as we understand that term, except as he does his work by proxy. There is no remedy but to seek such opportunities as may be open to him to reach individuals, and in public discourses so to present his truth as to hit in the exact center known cases. He should strive to strike every hearer at least once. He must show the man who wishes to be baptized, but who can not give up his opinion that

on the conscience of the mean man, that Christianity, like idolatry, is to *cost* something. He must show the woman who has an idiot son, whom she can not refrain from reviling and beating, that Christ can make even her burden lighter, if she will but cast it upon Him. His business, in short, is to make it practically apparent that Christianity is the art of right living, and while he may seldom think it wise to decide points of casuistry, he should teach principles, which, rightly applied, will enable his hearers to decide. The difference between a principle and a rule is vital, it is the difference between a compass and a railway track. The latter is iron and inflexible. The former has a needle which is poised on a pivot, and is subject to variations in different latitudes, indeed the whole binnacle swings in its gimbals in a condition of equilibrium, yet the needle still points to the magnetic pole. We should try to give a biblical compass to every convert. It is related that a little grand-daughter of Dr. Emmons came to him one day with the inquiry, whether it is true as currently reported, that the Moon is made of Green Cheese. Instead of enlightening her darkness, the shrewd old theologian sent her back to the Bible to ascertain the point for herself. After a brief, and Emmons-like quest, she returned saying, 'It is not true, grand papa. The Moon is not made of Green Cheese.' 'How do you know that;' he inquired. 'Because,' answered the child, 'the Moon was created first, and Cows afterward!' We should aim so to teach the Chinese that Green Cheese heresies will be detected by their own inquiries. The kind of practical preaching here indicated will, if followed up by efforts with and for individuals, help to prevent the Christian Churches gathered among the Chinese, from being simply 'baptized heathen.' The Chinese are preeminently a gregarious race. To follow a leader, is unto them an instinct rather than an acquirement. Whatever the lesson, if it is to be learned by rote only, they can learn it. The whole system of Chinese education prepares them to receive in one bolus, indigestible masses of what may prove to be either wisdom or nonsense. Which it may turn out to be, they are by no means concerned to discover. Thus a toothless old woman, who has for half a life-time maintained a local reputation as an Exorciser of evil spirits (*Pao-mo*) accepts Christianity, and learns to repeat the Lord's prayer with the same facility which she displayed in reciting the abracadabra of her former calling. Does she understand this prayer or any other? 'It is a good thing' said an old woman of seventy who wished to be baptized, her small, rat-like eyes trembling with all the intelligence of which she was capable, when she was asked her reasons for desiring baptism. 'It is a good

thing, and that is all there is about it!' Scholars who can recite the Book of Odes from beginning to end without hesitation and without a glimmer of an idea as to the meaning of a single rhyme, are not likely to be troubled by a shorter catechism, or a still shorter creed. A child in a London school, who could repeat the catechism without a break or stumble, was called upon to *write out* one of his answers, and this is what he wrote:

'My duty toads God is to bleed in him to fering and to loaf
'without your arts withhold my mine with old my sold and with my
'sernth to whirchp and to give thanks to put my old trast in him to
'call upon him to owner his old name and his world and to save
'him truly all the days of my life's end.'

Any process by which we can ascertain exactly how much or how little our converts really know is most useful in showing us how to give them the help which they so much need. In a volume of posthumous sermons by the celebrated Dr. Tyler, Professor of Theology in the East Windsor Theological Seminary [now removed to Hartford] there is a discourse on the topic; 'The sinfulness of Stupidity.' That is a good subject for the Chinese. The word 'Stupidity' is here however employed in the technical sense common in New England Theology to denote a person who is almost hopelessly indifferent to Christian truth. There is a sense in which some audiences of Chinese Christians are as unimpressible as Chinese heathen. They have learned a few fundamental truths and that is the end of it. They never retreat from that position, but then, on the other hand, they never advance beyond it. There are wide differences between city converts and country converts, and between those in one place and those in another place under conditions apparently the same, but the general fact of a certain baptized apathy will not be disputed. One man of this class remarked of a sermon; I have *heard beyond that* (聽過去了). We must try and preach, so as to shake this class of hearers out of their spiritual coma. A countryman who had listened with intelligent interest to the story of the creation, *naively* inquired; Have you any *other* instruction to give? Richard Baxter, in his 'Reformed Pastor, offers some shrewd advice as to the best way of dealing with opinionated and self conceited persons who are more ready to teach than to be taught. 'Preach,' he says, 'to such auditors as these, some higher points which shall be above their understandings. Feed them not always 'milk' but sometimes with 'strong meat'; for it exceedingly puffs them up with pride when they hear nothing from ministers but what they already know, and can say themselves; this it is that makes them think themselves as wise as you, and as fit to

be teachers, and it is this that hath set so many of them on preaching, for they believe that you know no more than you preach.' It is said that Baxter himself made it a point to preach about once a year, a sermon that hardly any one could understand or follow, with a view to affording his people a practical demonstration that he did not ordinarily preach all that he knew, and that he had at his command vast reserves. Whatever may be thought of the propriety of such a course as this toward congregations in Christian lands, it is undoubtedly desirable to produce in the minds of Chinese Christians an abiding conviction that the Bible is a great book—a deep book—a profound, an infinite Book; that it takes hold on the human soul, and embraces the whole compass of human life here and hereafter.

We must endeavor to make Chinese Christians feel that, whatever their knowledge, experience, and attainment, there are continental areas of Christian truth yet untraversed, and oceanic depths yet unfathomed and unfathomable, yet so as to incite, not to discourage them—so as to attract, and not to repel.

2. Preaching to Chinese Christians should observe *proportion*. We should rightly divide the word of truth, not only adapting our instruction as far as possible to each individual hearer, but exhibiting, as much as in us lies, the principal truths of Christianity in due order, and with due relative emphasis. It is felt that such an adjustment of preaching as secures this due proportion, is always one of the most difficult problems of the practical pastor anywhere, and to gain it is one of the last results of a sanctified pastoral experience. There are, as already marked, on the one hand some converts who appear almost incapable of any advance in Christian truths. For these we need line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. Our audiences in point of capacity, are most heterogeneous; the *average intelligence*, let us not forget, even of Christian auditors is necessarily low. They know but little and they forget much. Skillful care will doubtless enable the wise preacher to combine even in the same discourse, thoughts which shall be helpful to many different classes, though he may not succeed in dividing the word to all in the same proportion. Much that is still preached in the pulpit of Western Lands, where generations of hereditary religion have left many fossil deposits may safely be omitted. In some cases the lava from religious volcanoes—now happily nearly or quite

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how to explain them nor what to call them. There is perhaps no perfectly satisfactory term in Chinese, to denote the distinction between sub-lapsarianism, and supra-lapsarianism. It is by no means an unmixed advantage that the Chinese do not know all that is to be known about the history of Christianity. There is much which we could wish rather to bury under ground, than to proclaim from the house-top.—The practical presentation of the Evidences of Christianity will assume, in preaching to Chinese Christians, a very different shape from that which it assumes in England or in the United States. The Chinese mind is not analytical. They do not trace back and sift out, as ages of more or less scientific training have taught us to do. The questions, for instance, raised in the Prolegomena to Dr. Legge's translation of the Classics, as to the identity of the modern text and the ancient text,—such inquiries as Western scholars raise and exhaustively discuss with regard to the least important works of antiquity,—do not, it may safely be said, even suggest themselves to one Chinese scholar in a thousand, and not one in ten thousand of those to whom the questions have perhaps occurred, takes the trouble to pursue them independently, and to reach a conclusion for himself. Indeed the study of the Evidences of Christianity, as we understand it, resembles the study of Chemistry. On the part of the Chinese both the ideas and the symbols of the ideas have to be first imparted and then interpreted. How far this spirit of inquiry is to be aroused in order the more thoroughly to afford a firm basis for faith, how deeply we shall dig, with a view to great security of foundation, each thoughtful preacher must cautiously, and prayerfully, decide for himself.

We need not pursue the subject into the presentation of the leading doctrines, nor attempt to settle what the proportion shall be. Our task is complete when the question has been stated, however inadequate the statement.

3. In order to preach well to Chinese Christians (or to any other) it is necessary to have what Dr. Bushnell called a 'Faith Talent.' The education, and the civilization of the Chinese, as we can not too often remind ourselves, are radically different from our own. Even human nature in China frequently presents itself in what appear to us distorted forms. After a longer or a shorter experience, most missionaries sometimes feel that the regeneration of China as a whole, or even of any individual in it, is a work too great to be accomplished. Many a missionary has sat, like Elijah under his juniper tree, and in deep despondency of spirit has exclaimed with Paul; 'Who is sufficient for these things?' It is currently reported that there are some most zealous missionaries

in China, who are faithfully preaching the Gospel, not because they expect the Chinese to believe and accept it, but simply as a 'testimony.' A man was once observed climbing a tall tree. Just as he reached the upper branches, a black-bird flew past and lit upon another tree. The man then descended and climbed the second tree, from which the bird flew as before, alighting upon another tree, where his pursuer, still undiscouraged, followed him. A spectator, who had for some time watched this process, observed to the tree climber; 'You surely do not expect to *catch* that bird, in that way, do you?' 'Oh! no,' was the reply, 'but I thought I would *worry him a little!*' Missionary work in China is at times of the most encouraging nature and at times the reverse; but those missionaries who do not expect that the Chinese will be converted, and the height of whose ambition is to 'worry' them a little, are certainly not to be envied.

In the early days of the State of Illinois, the Legislature passed a bill which had for its object the regulation of the currency of that new region. The native of France who, as Lieut Governor presided over the State Senate, recognizing the futility of the measure, reported the result to that body, in the following terms; 'Gentlemen, the bill is passed, but gentlemen I bet you five hundred dollars that he never comes to nothings!' The man who can safely risk five hundred dollars that his preaching 'never comes to nothings' would do well to call a halt. To bring Chinese Churches to a condition of self-support, to teach them to maintain efficient discipline, to develop within them an earnest missionary spirit—these are high aims and aspirations but if their realization is not believed to be possible, how can they be held up as reasonable objects of pursuit? At a certain missionary prayer meeting one of the speakers observed that we ought not to expect too much from the Chinese, who are not Anglo-Saxons but Asiatics. The leader [of the meeting] judiciously replied that it is worth remembering in this connection that Christ was an 'Asiatic,' the Apostles were 'Asiatics.' The point is well taken, and is worthy of attentive consideration.

4. To those who have followed us thus far, other and scarcely less important considerations concerning preaching to the Chinese will have suggested themselves. One only can be here named. It applies, like the last specification, equally to preaching addressed to Heathen and to that directed to Christians. The preacher must have a *love* for those whom he is trying to save. With all their many excellent qualities, the Chinese are not, in general, people to whom, for their own sakes, a foreigner is likely to become excessively

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extinct—has buried the soil almost out of sight. It is hard even for an intelligent Occidental Christian to understand thoroughly all the endless ramifications of Christian sects. To the Chinese they are of necessity almost entirely unintelligible. We do not know ^{attached} attached. 'I love Heung^{Heung},' said an intimate friend of P^{Phorcan} Phorcan, 'but I can not like him.' Doubtless there are many who feel for the Chinese the love of benevolence, who can not contrive to like them. That a missionary should be engaged in a perpetual introspection in order to scrutinize his motives, and to ascertain the register of his feelings, is not desirable. That he should be deeply drawn to the work in which he is engaged, and that he should regard it as his calling, is, however, indispensable. One who does not love the Chinese, will soon weary even of conducting a medical dispensary for their benefit. He will weary of preaching much sooner, because he will be very unlikely to witness any cures. Mere professional enthusiasm will not, in either case, supply an impulse sufficiently powerful and sufficiently permanent to lead to anything valuable. The great motive to Christian effort of any kind is the love of Christ constraining us. He came from Heaven to earth to redeem the race, and sends his disciples everywhere to proclaim that redemption. The first duty is to go—the next to deliver the message. In one of Christ's most instructive parables, there is a very suggestive expression. Before the Good Samaritan could do anything for the relief of the unfortunate traveller, it was first necessary that he should *'come where he was.'* It is thus that sympathy is actively excited, by actual contact with suffering. There are many in our day who are quite willing to drop the injured man a postal card, or if necessary write him a letter, perhaps they might even subscribe five or ten dollars a year to send him a message. This is well, so far as it goes, but in the end, before anything truly valuable can be done for the wounded traveller, it is necessary to *come where he is.* Having got thus far, some are for gradually *educating* the patient up to the level of the beast upon which they themselves are riding. Others are not unwilling to play the Good Samaritan, but with the omission of the oil, the wine, and the two-pence. The method which Christ has indicated, is, however, the only one which in the long-run accomplishes anything. To imitate the good Samaritan, is in an imperfect manner to imitate Christ, and to exhibit Christian love in Christian act. Without this love no industrious ingenuity will succeed in saving a soul; with this love no one need despair of success.

Preaching to the Chinese is a task for Angels. But it has pleased God to commit this treasure to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Perhaps no better advice can be given to those who preach to the Chinese, than that which is constantly offered to those who wish to be saved—first to work with as single hearted energy as if the result were dependent wholly upon themselves, and then to commit the matter entirely to God, as if that result were altogether dependent upon him, for it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do. It is thus only that we may become workers together with God, thus only that we shall reap in due season, if we faint not.



